

# DINKEY LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**QUESTION:** *What is the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project?*

**ANSWER:** The Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project is a collaborative, science-based ecological restoration initiative covering approximately 154,000 acres in the southern Sierra Nevada within eastern Fresno County, including 130,000 acres on the Sierra National Forest and 24,000 acres of private land, with 20,500 acres belonging to landscape partners. The Dinkey Collaborative is a 10-year project supported by a broad spectrum of active participants working together to restore the Dinkey Landscape through mechanical forest thinning treatments and reintroducing fire, including cultural burning; to improve land and water habitat for native species; and to use forest restoration byproducts to offset treatment costs while benefitting local economies and improving forest health.

**QUESTION:** *Why is the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project needed?*

**ANSWER:** The Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project encompasses a diverse area containing oak woodland, foothill chaparral, conifer forests and wetland meadows, which support a wide variety of wildlife including the rare Pacific fisher, California spotted owl and Yosemite toad. The Dinkey Landscape is a major recreation destination, hosting more than 1.5 million visitors annually who enjoy camping, boating, fishing, horse riding, hunting, hiking, bicycling, and off-road vehicle use. Much of the project area has experienced a lack of regular fire that historically shaped the vegetation, resulting in altered forest composition and higher fuel loadings. Every summer, approximately 5,000 homes clustered in four communities including Shaver Lake, risk uncharacteristic wildfire. Through the work of the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, local communities and Californians will benefit from lower wildfire management costs; clean water and air; enhanced public health and safety; abundant recreational opportunities and a thriving tourism industry; cultural and sacred resources that are protected; meaningful employment and viable businesses; a sustainable supply of woody biomass and small-diameter trees.

**QUESTION:** *What does the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project do to restore the forest?*

**ANSWER:** This collaborative effort works to restore the Dinkey Landscape through:

- mechanical forest thinning treatments and reintroducing fire, including cultural burning, reducing both the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire and fire management costs;
- improving land and water habitat for several key species; and
- using forest restoration byproducts to offset treatment costs while benefitting local economies and improving forest health.

Projects may include meadow restoration, forest thinning, road improvements or decommissioning, applying prescribed fire and increasing managed fire, invasive species removal, water quality improvement, or activities that contribute toward the restoration of old growth forests by maximizing the retention of large trees while focusing on small diameter tree removal.

**QUESTION:** *Who is currently involved in the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project?*

**ANSWER:** The Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project is a collaborative effort supported by a broad spectrum of active participants, including representatives from the local fire safe council, California Native American tribes, the forest products industry and timber mill owners, Southern California Edison, local landowners, national and regional conservation organizations, local and state recreation organizations, University of California, Merced, and other resource management and regulatory public agencies. The High Sierra Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest leads the project and a variety of staff specialists regularly attend Dinkey Collaborative meetings.

**QUESTION:** *How can I join the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project?*

**ANSWER:** Membership is open to representatives of different public interests engaged in forest ecosystem restoration. All members are required to formally commit to uphold the group's Charter, which explains the charge and deliverables, the structure, the planning and decision-making process, and the procedural guidelines for the Collaborative. Regular attendance is also required for all active participants.

**QUESTION:** *Is the Dinkey Collaborative effort subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act?*

**ANSWER:** Per 41 CFR Parts 102-3, the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) does not apply to a group that an agency contractor has assembled according to contract terms to provide advice and recommendations to the agency on planning. FACA does not apply because the contractor is managing or controlling the group, not the agency (in this case, the U.S. Forest Service, Sierra National Forest). Therefore, the Dinkey Collaborative is not subject to FACA because the Sierra National Forest has hired a contractor – the Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS – to manage and control the group.

**QUESTION:** *How is input from the Dinkey Collaborative documented? How does the Forest Service use this input with regards to the National Environmental Policy Act?*

**ANSWER:** All decisions, agreements, recommendations, and reservations of the Dinkey Collaborative are documented in meeting summaries, summaries of individual recommendations, and/or individual letters of support, which are part of the public record and are made available on the project website. This includes the names of those collaborative members who support or oppose specific decisions, agreements, or recommendations. Participating in the Dinkey Collaborative does not supplant the right of members to engage in the traditional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental review process, including submitting comments and attending public meetings on any project.

**QUESTION:** *How is the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project related to the Forest Plan Revision process?*

**ANSWER:** A key to developing a Forest Plan revision will be continued collaboration with interested members of the public and key stakeholders on updated social and natural resource assessments and scientific syntheses. Sierra National Forest will be developing a communication and collaboration plan early in the process. The Forest is likely to conduct briefings with local elected officials and tribal leaders, and to coordinate communication efforts with key organizations that serve as a vehicle for public outreach. In order to maximize time and capitalize on the efforts of the collaboratives already established, focused discussion sessions with the existing Dinkey and the Willow Creek collaboratives will be held as part of their regular meetings to solicit feedback. In addition to these efforts, the Sierra National Forest will hold formal National Environmental Policy Act scoping meetings and conduct briefings at key planning milestones.

**QUESTION:** *How is the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project funded?*

**ANSWER:** The Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project is funded by the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Fund, established by Title IV of Public Law 111-11 in 2009, which provides:

- funding authority for all Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects nationwide for requests by the Secretary of Agriculture of up to \$40,000,000 annually for fiscal years 2009 through 2019;
- up to 50 percent of the cost of carrying out and monitoring ecological restoration treatments on National Forest System land for each proposal selected;
- up to \$4 million annually for any one project;
- up to two projects per year in any one Forest Service region; and
- up to 10 projects per year nationally.

**QUESTION:** *How is Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program monitoring funded?*

**ANSWER:** Monitoring can and should be included in Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program proposals. Up to 50% of the cost of implementing and monitoring can be covered in selected proposals using the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Fund (CFLR Fund). Donated time from external partners involved with monitoring can and should be included in proposal requests and project reporting as partnership in-kind services value. Required monitoring not covered by the CFLR Fund, including timeframes beyond when CFLR funds are authorized, needs to be funded with Regional appropriated or similar funds. Programmatic monitoring such as forest plan-level monitoring activities cannot be covered with the CFLR fund, nor do these activities qualify for CFLR match when other appropriated funds are used.

**QUESTION:** *What monitoring is allowed to be funded with Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program funding?*

**ANSWER:** Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) funding can be used to fund implementation and effectiveness monitoring of proposed restoration treatments. CFLRP funding cannot be used for research or monitoring beyond the CFLRP project (for example, Forest Plan monitoring). Monitoring with CFLR funds is limited to assessing whether the project was implemented to the specifications and assessing the direct effects of the restoration treatment(s).